

VioletsFun

The Violet Barn newsletter

November 2022 - No. 105

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Our calendar:

No events or shows scheduled until spring 2023.

International customers.

Due to complications from weather and holidays, no international shipping until March 2023.

Winter shipping in effect.

Safe arrival guaranteed only by Express mail when signed for upon delivery.

Free stuff and how to get it!

2023 AVSA Show awards.

Best Robinson collections
1st place: \$200
2nd place: \$100

Write a review.

Write a review on product pages before ordering. Get a free plant added to order.

Join AVSA.

See further below in this column.

(Some of) What's New:



Bristol's Snow Storm. Our newest streptocarpus, it will cover itself in clear white, long-lasting, blooms that contrast nicely with deep green, compact, foliage. Easy growing, very easy and heavy blooming.

Check the website for all of the newest varieties. We expect to introduce new varieties over the coming months.

What's news:

For domestic (US) customers, we continue to ship year-round, even in winter. From November through end of March, however, Express (overnite) mail will be the default shipping option, and the only means by which we guarantee safe arrival. Priority shipping during winter remains available, but is done at customer's risk.

New York State AVS Convention Show



After a two year absence, the show returned. It was lightly attended, as might be expected after such a long time. It's been longer since we've had a chance to attend.

The show itself was a pleasant surprise, given the circumstances. The tables were not crowded with plants, but were full. The photos above are a sampling. The first is "*Harbor Blue*", an old variety that was a favorite of ours--we won a BIS with this variety about 30 years ago! It's nice to see it again grown this well. To the right is *Primulina petrocsmoides*. An adorable species that I can't imagine being grown any better (neither of these are grown or sold by us presently). It was good to see plants and people together again.

Thanksgiving thoughts

With the holiday coming soon, a few thoughts came to mind when thinking recently about our life here at the Violet Barn. Growing (and selling) plants is a big, perhaps all consuming, part of our lives. Often difficult, but a life choice that we never

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Our shop and glasshouse at:
7209 County Road 12
Naples, New York 14512

Place an order for pickup!

For those living locally, we offer pickup service. Save on shipping and we'll have your plants waiting for you.

Are you a member?

Consider joining the African Violet Society of America. Sign up through our website and get a free plant! For more information, visit www.avsa.org

Has your collection grown far beyond violets? Consider joining the Gesneriad Society. For more info: www.gesneriadsociety.org

regret. Here's a list of thanks, not in any particular order, and certainly not all encompassing.

Thanks for bringing us together. We both gave up other careers to pursue growing plants for a livelihood. We met through our mutual interest, then married, and share a common daily purpose doing something we both love.

Thanks for providing us a good, but modest, living--better than the life of poverty our parents feared as self-employed farmers (they would be proud, and very surprised). Only one, tiny, complaint....can we ever take a day off???

Thanks also for, literally, brightening each day. Winter days in this part of the world can be cold, short, and often dark. Our growing space is always bright and warm. For someone who doesn't like the cold and snow, and another from a subtropical island, this can be real sanity saver. Plus, no commute! Unless a flight of stairs counts (of course this means we're never "away" from work either).

Thanks for showing us the world and introducing us to new places and friends. We've travelled to shows and events in every corner of the country, and passing through (making stops at gardens, greenhouses, conservatories, parks, etc. along the way) most every state in between. Not to mention to many parts of the world, to see, sell, or talk about, plants.

Thanks for keeping us young. We started young, both having our hands in the dirt at a young age. It's part of who we are. It is fortunate to live a life doing what it is that makes you...you.

Thanks for our loyal staff--good people are hard to find, but can be found. One of our first full-time hires in the business together is still with us now, part-time and in her 70's. A few years later we hired a teenager, still with us now with a family in his 40's. Our other staff has been with us many years as well. In the years since, we've had many work for us. Not all of our hires (and there have been many) have been as successful, but those that stay appreciate the work, and find happiness and value in it. We are thankful that we can provide satisfying work, even a career, and livelihood for them.

Thanks for our customers. The positive feedback can be a morale booster when we are otherwise overwhelmed with work, or difficulties arise. The negative is a reason to overcome problems and a motivation to improve. This newsletter's readers, as well--thanks for reading and sharing!

This month's questions:

Thank you for the new violets I grabbed while at your place. I have a question about your watering system. Do the mats stay wet continuously, or do they get watered at intervals and dry out some? Is there a drain at a low point on each shelf?

There is no drain. The shelves are as close to flat and level as we can make them. Each shelf is made from plastic (PVC sheet with PVC moulding glued around the edge to act as a lip)--basically a very large "tray". The mat material is simple acrylic blanket cut to fit--any cheap, twin size blanket found at WalMart or Target will likely work. The purpose of the blanket is to "even" the water out. Without it, water would inevitably pool in the lower portions of the shelf--since they aren't perfectly flat or level. It absorbs the water and moves it evenly over the shelf beneath the pots, which then take up the water through the drainage holes. It allows us to water in a few minutes what might take an hour if each plant were individually watered by hand.

We don't keep the mat wet continuously, though we could. We let the mat dry, and water again when many of the plants on the shelf appear to be in need of watering--the same "dry to the touch" rule for most any watering method. It is a compromise, though. Watering all plants on the shelf at once means that some will be watered when a bit too dry or still a bit wet. For this reason, we use a very light soil mix (lots of coarse perlite and vermiculite), and place plants on the blanket only when they are mature enough to handle some extra wetness without consequence.

When using capillary mats, does fertilizer build up on mats as water evaporates? If so, is fertilizer use reduced to compensate?

It can, especially if mats are kept wet all, or most, of the time. We empty the shelves about once a month to groom plants, and use this as an opportunity to wash the blankets and clean the shelves. We then replace the blankets with clean ones, and return (and add) plants to the shelves, properly spaced and arranged. If mats are kept wet, then fertilizer can be reduced, as the plants will be processing a bit more fertilizer than usual. Wet blankets under bright light also will lead to algae appearing in time, turning your blankets green. This is another reason we wash them regularly--adding a small amount of Physan 20 (one Tbl per 10-15 gallons the first watering after changing the blanket) also helps, as does using darker color blankets.

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